

cooperated with Russia in these negotiations. Because the Czech Republic and Poland fall within the boundaries of former Russian influence, U.S. actions with regard to the GMD have been perceived by Russia as an intrusion. There can be no doubt that U.S. efforts to impose the GMD are perceived as an obstruction to the diplomatic ties between our nations.

Assertions made by the Administration that the U.S. ICBM system could be used to protect the European Union reflect a flawed policy. If the Administration is concerned about the threat of ICBM attack on Europe it should cooperate with the international community to address these concerns instead of pursuing even more unilateral international policing. NATO is a better forum in which to address these concerns.

The timing of Secretary Rice's trip to sign the agreement is also questionable. The Conference Report for the FY 2008 Department of Defense, DOD, authorization requires an independent assessment of the two stage interceptors as well as an independent analysis to assess alternatives to the European GMD. The assessment will not be released until after Secretary Rice's trip. If the assessment finds the GMD and the interceptors to be as unnecessary, unviable, and counterproductive to diplomacy as I have outlined in this letter, it will make it difficult to turn back. Additionally, the December 2007 National Intelligence Estimate on Iran states that Tehran halted its nuclear program in 2003 and as such, reaffirms the lack of an impending nuclear threat to the United States from Iran. This further confirms that there is no urgent need to sign a formal agreement with the Czech Republic in June.

The viability, necessity and prudence of the fulfillment of a formal agreement with both the Czech Republic and Poland on the European GMD are called into question. Furthermore, this \$4 billion project will be solely funded by U.S. taxpayers. I urge you to cancel the upcoming trip by Secretary Rice to the Czech Republic and instead focus on the more pressing diplomatic efforts that are needed to protect U.S. security through our relationships with the international community.

Sincerely,

DENNIS J. KUCINICH,
Member of Congress.

CELEBRATING ISRAEL'S 60TH ANNIVERSARY

HON. TODD TIAHRT

OF KANSAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 14, 2008

Mr. TIAHRT. Madam Speaker, congratulations to the people of Israel and their forebearers on the 60th anniversary of the reestablishment of the State of Israel. Born out of genocide and conflict, the modern State of Israel has developed into a free, democratic and prosperous country. An unfailing ally of the United States, Israel is a beacon of freedom and religious tolerance in the Middle East. I am honored to strongly support the modern State of Israel and reaffirm the bonds of close friendship and cooperation between the United States and Israel.

The narrow strip of land that now constitutes modern Israel has been important to the Jewish people for four millennia, and the first Jewish kingdom was established in this region over 3,000 years ago. Although forced to emigrate from the historical Jewish homeland over

the centuries, the Jewish people have continuously yearned for and often returned to their home. History shows that waves of Jewish people returned to the Holy Land at the very least during the 12th, 15th, 16th, and 18th centuries. Large-scale migration back to Israel started in the late 1800s and continues through today.

On November 29, 1947, the United Nations General Assembly formally approved the partitioning of the British Mandate of Palestine and the creation of a Jewish State. On May 14, 1948, the people of Israel proclaimed the establishment of the modern State of Israel. Under the leadership of President Harry S. Truman, the United States was the first nation to recognize the State of Israel and establish full diplomatic relations.

Over the course of three wars, countless military operations, constant terrorism, and unjustified diplomatic and economic boycotts, Israel's existence has been continuously threatened. But, through it all, the Jewish people have remained vigilant and continue to build a strong and vibrant state.

Today, Israel has one of the leading economies in the Middle East, while maintaining a strong commitment to human rights, freedom of speech, press and religion, and democratic values. With open and free elections, and an independent judiciary, Israel remains the most democratic country in the region.

Since the creation of the modern State of Israel, the hallmark of the relationship with the United States has been a strong friendship. Israel has been a trusted military ally and partner for six decades. The close relationship between our governments and continued military assistance are essential for promoting democracy and peace in the Middle East and throughout the world.

In times of humanitarian need or global crisis, the United States can always count on Israel to stand close and provide assistance. From contributing search-and-rescue teams following the 1998 bombings of the American Embassies in east Africa, to providing humanitarian aid following the 2005 devastation of the Gulf Coast from a series of hurricanes, the State of Israel has always been a stalwart friend to the American people. The United States must remain committed to supporting the State of Israel.

It is important to honor this historic milestone. The United States Congress and the American people look forward to continued growth and success of the State of Israel. I ask that all my colleagues honor this important anniversary.

A TRIBUTE TO THE LIFE OF ERNEST S. KINNEY

HON. JIM COSTA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 14, 2008

Mr. COSTA. Madam Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the life of Ernest S. Kinney of Fresno, California who recently passed away at 63 years of age. He leaves behind a loving wife, Marion, two children and several grandchildren.

Mr. Kinney was born and raised in Bishop, California. In 1962 he went to Fresno State to play football, and in 1965 he served as stu-

dent body president and President of the 16th State College Student President's Association. Upon graduating from Fresno State he joined the U.S. Marine Corp in 1968 and served as a Captain until 1971.

After his military career Mr. Kinney attended the San Joaquin College of Law while working as a social worker during the day. He graduated as part of the school's second graduating class in 1975 and was inducted into the Hall of Fame in 2007.

After only two and a half short years Ernest established his own private practice in 1978 and formed the Ernest S. Kinney Law Corporation. During more than three decades of practicing law he gained the respect of the entire community. He was tough and dedicated and admired by his colleagues, and he will be remembered mostly for his colorful character and his skills in the courtroom.

Ernest enjoyed the simple things in life like going to football and basketball games with friends, going to the beach with his grandchildren and lunches with his friends. He had passion and he loved people.

It goes without saying that Mr. Ernest Kinney was one of kind. His commitment to family and clients will forever live in the lives of the people he touched. His passion for justice under the law will be remembered by all who knew him. I am honored and humbled to join his family in celebrating the life of this amazing man who will never be forgotten.

INTRODUCTION OF THE SAVING ENERGY THROUGH PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION ACT OF 2008

HON. JAMES L. OBERSTAR

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 14, 2008

Mr. OBERSTAR. Madam Speaker, together with Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Ranking Member JOHN L. MICA and Highways and Transit Subcommittee Chairman PETER A. DEFAZIO, I am pleased to introduce H.R. 6052, the "Saving Energy Through Public Transportation Act of 2008."

We are introducing this bill to promote energy savings through increased public transportation use in the United States. Recently, public transportation has experienced a renaissance in American cities and towns. In 2007, Americans took over 10.3 billion trips on public transportation, the highest level in 50 years. Public transportation use is up 32 percent since 1995, a figure that is more than double the growth rate of the population and is substantially over the growth rate for the vehicle miles traveled on our Nation's highways for that same period. All around the country, voters continue to approve state and local ballot initiatives to support public transportation, even when it means local taxes will be raised or continued.

As the price of gas approaches \$4 a gallon, even more commuters are choosing to ride the train or the bus to work rather than drive alone in their cars. Transit systems in metropolitan areas are reporting increases in ridership of 5, 10, and even 15 percent over last year's figures. Some of the biggest increases in ridership are occurring in many areas in the South and West where new bus and light rail lines have been built in the last few years.